



# Mississippi River Visitor Center

## Program Guide



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers** ©

## Visiting Us?

While visiting our facility your group can experience navigation up close! We offer the best view of the mighty Mississippi River and of the locking through process. You can watch as pilots skillfully maneuver cargo in and out of the lock, or relax during our short film about the Upper Mississippi River. There are several new exhibits to explore, an outdoor observation deck, a river specific gift shop, and even an aquarium with native river fish!

## Visiting You?

If your group is unable to make a trip to the visitor center then we can come to you! There are many programs to choose from that are lead by a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Park Ranger. We can bring our fun and educational programs to local schools, churches, clubs, or any public entity within a **25-mile radius** of the Quad City area.

## Scheduling Programs

To schedule a program, call the Visitor Center at (309) 794-5338. Most programs last 45 minutes to an hour and some have hands on activities! A minimum of two weeks advance notice is required and a group must consist of 10 or more people (smaller groups may be considered). Large groups may be split into smaller ones and a ratio of 1 adult to every 10 students is required. Scheduling will be limited by the availability of staff, weather conditions, and other considerations by the Lock Master. All programs are presented by a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Park Ranger between the hours of 9:30 a.m. and 4 p.m. for offsite programs and 9:00 and 4:30 for onsite programs. There will be special consideration if you have a program outside of these hours.

Mississippi River Visitor Center **GPS Address: 200 Rodman Avenue**  
**Rock Island, IL 61201**

Email: [mvrodmn15@usace.army.mil](mailto:mvrodmn15@usace.army.mil)

Website: [www.missriver.org](http://www.missriver.org)



## Natural Resource Management Section Rock Island District



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

### Choose a Tour

#### Tours

Park Rangers provide guided tours for groups. Pre-registration is required for all tours.

#### Visitor Center Tour (All Ages)

- This is a guided tour of our facility and typically lasts 30-45 minutes. Depending on the age of the group, topics that may be covered are: Upper Mississippi River history, navigation, the locking through process, flood control, towboats, barges, and cargo. Our facility is fully accessible.

#### Locks and Dam Tour (3<sup>rd</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade, school groups) (Any age for public or private {family} tours)

- This is an outdoor walking tour that lasts 45 minutes to an hour. It involves walking onto the lock and out to view the dam, if conditions allow. Topics covered are: river history, lock and dam operation, towboats, barges, cargo, the Government Bridge, river hazards, and much more.
  - \* Age requirement – 8 and up on school/group tours.
  - \* On public or private tours any age child may go on the tour.
  - \* For children under 8 a parent or adult guardian must have direct contact with child.
  - \* Footwear – Closed Toe Shoes are required.
  - \* No cameras, backpacks, bags or purses are allowed on tour.



#### Clock Tower Tour (All ages)

- This is an indoor walking tour of the historic Clock Tower building. The tour winds up 12 flights of stairs to the top of the tower for a breath taking view of the Quad Cities! As you climb the stairs you will learn the unique history of this national historic landmark, and get to view one of the few clocks of its type that is still in operation today!

#### Clock Tower/Bald Eagle Watch Tour (All ages)

- This tour is seasonal, usually December thru February, and combines a historic clock tower tour with eagle watching! Rangers provide spotting scopes for eagle viewing, but feel free to bring binoculars. A short educational film is part of this program and topics discussed are: eagle biology, eagle migration, eagle etiquette, and population.



## **Historical Bike Tours** (All ages)



- This is a relaxing 6 mile guided tour of Arsenal Island's historic hot spots and points of interest such as the Colonel Davenport home, the Confederate Cemetery, Quarters One, and much more! Give us a call and we will be glad to sign your group up.

- \* Bicycles are not provided by the visitor center
- \* Helmets are required for every person on the bike tour
- \* No training wheels
- \* Scheduling only spring thru fall months, weather permitting.

## **Pick A Program!**

### **Programs**

The following programs can be presented either at your facility or ours. These programs are 45 minutes to an hour long.

### **Water Safety Programs**

- **Water Safety** (All Ages)

One mission of the US Army Corps of Engineers is to promote water safety. We want to help keep you and our waterways safe! We offer fun and innovative approaches to water safety. Our programs are perfect for all audiences, young and old. The different topics covered are: personal flotation devices, water safety rules, hypothermia, steps to follow when rescuing a drowning victim, and the effects of alcohol on swimmers and boaters.



- **Illinois Safe Boating Certification Class** (\*12 years - Adult)

Boating on the Mississippi can be hazardous: wing dams, floating objects, tow traffic, and other dangers lurk about. This is an 8 hour boater safety certification class. It covers information on: boating laws and regulations, hidden hazards on the river, personal watercraft safety, and the effects of alcohol on boaters.

- \* Children under 12 may take the class. They must pass the written exam, once this is done their test and registration will be sent to the IL DNR. Once the child reaches 12 the DNR will mail their certificate to them.
- \* Spring only; call 309-794-5338 for details.

### **School Programs**

- **American Bald Eagles** (K-8<sup>th</sup> grade)

Why do hundreds of Bald Eagles visit our area every winter? This program will answer your Bald Eagle questions and tell you much more! Topics include: eagle biology, eagle etiquette, terminology, and population growth. A short informative film is optional. For younger ages we have an eagle costume and dress up some lucky student! If this program is presented at the visitor center during winter months then eagle viewing may be possible too!



- **Birds of the Mississippi River** (3<sup>rd</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade)  
Living near the Mississippi River means we see many different types of birds using the flyway. Some stay with us all year long while others just stop for a visit. This program uses PowerPoint equipment that enables students to see and hear birds! Topics covered are: identification, learning to use a field guide, identifying bird by site and sound, writing field notes, and birding terminology.
- **Build a Beaver** (1<sup>st</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> grade)  
Beavers still inhabit the Mississippi River region. This is an interactive program for young students to start learning about wildlife. Topics covered are: habitat, social aspects, and the effects beaver dams have on the environment. We even dress some lucky student up in a beaver costume to illustrate a beaver's unique characteristics!
- **Discover Wildlife in your World** (K - 8<sup>th</sup> grade)  
This program is an introductory presentation that explores wildlife in a variety of rural, suburban, and urban habitats. It discusses how people affect their environment and what we can do to improve wildlife habitat right where we live. Topics covered are wildlife, habitat, basic needs, conservation, and environmental awareness.
- **Earth Day** (K - 8<sup>th</sup> grade)  
Celebrate Earth Day any day! Earth Day activities have such a wide topical range that the program depends on the presenting ranger. We are open to teacher's suggestions for topics like environmental awareness, habitat protection, water resources, and endangered species.
- **Forests are More Than Just Trees** (1<sup>st</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> grade)  
This program begins with a PowerPoint presentation introducing students to forests - complex communities of plants and animals and one of our most valuable resources! In combination with this, topics covered are: types, levels, and benefits of forests, terminology, and forests as habitats. This program also includes hands on activities for the students.
- **History of the Rock Island Rapids** (3<sup>rd</sup> - Adult)  
The landscape of the Mississippi River has changed over time. The section of river that flows through the Quad Cities was at one time rapids. These rapids, then known as the Rock Island Rapids, were some of the most dangerous sections of the Mississippi River to navigate. We will take you through time and piece together our river's changing landscape and history. Topics covered will be the Mississippi River (Upper vs. Lower), locks and dams, the 9' foot channel project, and much more.
- **Jr. Ranger Program** (1<sup>st</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> grade)  
This is a series of five program topics. It can be presented to schools, clubs, or scout groups. We typically schedule one session per week for five weeks. The last program is an optional field trip to the visitor center for graduation. Upon completion of the programs, each student receives an official Jr. Ranger certificate. The following topics are covered:
  - Forestry
  - Wildlife
  - Environmental Protection
  - Water Safety
  - Corps Ranger Duties and Jr. Ranger Jeopardy!



- **Life on a Towboat** (K – 5<sup>th</sup> grade)  
We see towboats travel through the Quad Cities almost every day of the year. Who is on those towboats, where are they going, and what kind of cargo do they carry? This program explores what it is like living and working on the mighty Mississippi River.
- **Lincoln and the Railroad Bridge** (4<sup>th</sup> grade – 12<sup>th</sup> grade)  
The ruling behind the Abraham Lincoln and the Railroad Bridge case still stands today! Many of us who cross the government bridge are affected by this court ruling daily. Topics covered are: the first railroad bridge to cross the Mississippi River, steamboats vs. the railroad companies, and how Lincoln's big case still affects us today.
- **The North American Prairie** (3<sup>rd</sup> grade – 12<sup>th</sup> Grade)  
This photo based program will review the multifaceted habitat that existed on the North American Prairie. Included will be a look at many plant and animal species and human impact on them. The program will also review remnant restoration and reconstructions and their care.
- **Predator - Prey!** (K - 5<sup>th</sup> grade)  
This interactive power point program incorporates sound and movie clips to deliver an up close and exciting look at how animals eat without getting eaten! Topics covered include: animal designs, survival, predator/prey relationships, and terminology. The use of animal pelts, tracks, and skulls is an optional attention getter!
- **Soil - We Can't Grow Without It** (3<sup>rd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> grade)  
Soil - We Can't Grow Without It, deals with the importance of soil and our responsibility to conserve it. This program is designed to stimulate interest among children and adults about soil and its significance to plants, animals, and people. It also discusses how soil has been used and abused, the present dangers that threaten soil quality, and conservation techniques. This program can incorporate soil samples for student participation depending on classroom size and setting.
- **The Government Bridge "Trusses and Tracks"** (6<sup>th</sup> grade – 8<sup>th</sup> grade)  
This notorious bridge has been with us over a century through good times and bad. The bridge was an engineering miracle at the time it was built and it still operates today! This bridge is like a grandfather to the Quad Cities and has many stories to tell. Topics covered include: the order in which bridges were built in our area, controversy surrounding them, and how it affects us today.



- **Water - We Can't Live Without It** (3<sup>rd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> grade)  
Water - We Can't Live Without It, explores the fascinating cycle of water, its significance in our lives and in the natural world. Topics discussed are: conservation, freshwater habitats, the different forms and uses of water, as well as water supply and quality.

## Appropriate Ages for Programs

	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9-12
American Bald Eagles	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Birds of the Mississippi River				X	X	X	X	X	X	
Boating Safety								X	X	X
Build a Beaver	X	X	X	X	X					
Clock Tower - Bald Eagle Watch	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Clock Tower Tour	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Discover Wildlife in your World	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Earth Day	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Forest are More Than Just Trees		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Historical Bike Tour	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
History of the Rock Island Rapids				X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Jr. Ranger Program		X	X	X	X	X				
Life on a Towboat	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Lincoln and the Railroad Bridge							X	X	X	X
Lock and Dam Tour				X	X	X	X	X	X	X
North American Prairie				X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Predators - Prey	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Soil We Can't Grow Without It				X	X	X				
The Government Bridge							X	X	X	
Visitor Center Tour	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Water Safety	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Water We Can't Live Without It				X	X	X				